

Innovation Network

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

TECHNICAL FIELD

10 The invention relates to the submission and acceptance of suggestions. More particularly, the invention relates to an innovation network.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

15 In the past, employee who were interested in making suggestions for innovation and improvement to a company faced a difficult task of trying to figure out where to direct their suggestions. The company was also faced with a difficult task of trying to organize and evaluate suggestions relating to a myriad of different issues. At the same time, the company may receive numerous solicitations from third parties for investment into or alliance with their business. Companies
20 currently have no system for tracking receipt and internal comment and categorization to any of these corporate development activities.

25 D. Hager, C. Rose, *Method and Apparatus for Automated Procedure Initiations In A Data Processing System Including Soliciting An Evaluation Vote From Users Automatically Determined In Response To Identification of a Functional Area Associated with a Document*, U.S. Patent No. 5,377,355 (27 December 1994) disclose a method and apparatus in which a selected document is identified and evaluates of the selected document are automatically solicited from a selected group of evaluators. In one embodiment, the evaluators are automatically
30 selected in response to the technical or functional subject matter of the document.

35 R. Schloss, *System, Method and Computer Program Product For Reviewing and Creating Advisories For Data Located On a Content Server*, U.S. Patent No. 5,878,233 (2 March 1999) discloses a system and method which develops new and revised advisories on content loaded (or available to be loaded) by a client

from a content server via a protocol between the client and any number of advisory servers that maintain "ratings" knowledge bases.

5 D. Boulton, W. Vucenic, J. Stallings, *Method and Apparatus For Implementing User Feedback*, U.S. Patent Nos. 5,537,618 (16 July 1996) and 5,566,291 (15 October 1996) disclose a method and apparatus for implementing user feedback in which a user may activate an enter feedback mode command in a computer environment to provide feedback in a feedback interface.

10 Among other shortcomings, the prior art fails to recognize, let alone address, the need to accommodate unsolicited and/or unclassified ideas, suggestions, propositions, or innovations. It would be advantageous to provide an innovation network for receiving and classifying such ideas, suggestions, propositions, and innovations.

15 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention provides a central portal through which employees can make suggestions to a company and through which the company can enter all corporate development solicitations. The portal receives innovative suggestions that are then incorporated into one or more central databases, e.g. one database is provided for internal ideas and a separate database is provided for external solicitations. The databases allow suggestions to be categorized based upon key words, and allows peer review and comment. By providing a central database where all suggestions and solicitations and related information are stored, a company can effectively evaluate new innovations.

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Features of the preferred embodiment of the invention include a Web page where users can input suggestions for innovations; solicitation of key words related to suggestions for innovation; related suggestions are cross-referenced to minimize entry of duplicate suggestions; broad categories are provided for general classification of different types of ideas and more specific ideas; automatic emailing of specific types of suggestions to specific areas of

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responsibility within the company; a status field is provided that indicates whether plans are in place to implement an innovation; peer comments are recorded; and ability is provided such that employees who sign up for areas of interest are automatically notified by email when relevant, new ideas are entered.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block schematic diagram of an authorization process flow according to the invention;

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Fig. 2 is a block schematic diagram of a static content map for an idea submission system according to the invention;

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Fig. 3 is a block schematic diagram of an idea submission main page showing top links according to the invention;

Fig. 4 is a block schematic diagram of an idea submission main page showing bottom links according to the invention;

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Fig. 5 is a block schematic diagram of a search page site map according to the invention;

Fig. 6 is a flow diagram showing a SMART process according to the invention;

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Fig. 7 is a screen display showing a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 8 is a screen display showing an introduction and frequently asked questions (FAQ) dialogue for a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

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Fig. 9 is a screen display showing an executive introduction to a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 10 is a screen display showing a learning center page for a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 11 is a screen display showing a statistics page for a multi-portal home page
5 according to the invention;

Fig. 12 is a screen display showing a search page for a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

10 Fig. 13 is a screen display showing a search results page for a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 14 is a screen display showing a detailed search result for a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

15 Fig. 15 is a screen display showing a comment field for an idea located during a search in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

20 Fig. 16 is a screen display showing an idea submission dialog that is associated with an idea located during a search in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

25 Fig. 17 is a screen display showing an idea routing dialog that is associated with an idea located during a search in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 18 is a screen display showing an idea entry dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 19 is a screen display showing a related idea located during idea submission in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

5 Fig. 20 is a screen display showing an idea submission dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 21 is a screen display showing an idea submission review dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

10 Fig. 22 is a screen display showing an acknowledgement page for an idea submission in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 23 is an email acknowledgement for an idea submission in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

15 Fig. 24 is a screen display showing an idea routing dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

20 Fig. 25 is a screen display showing an initial idea submission dialog for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 26 is a screen display showing a related idea located during an idea submission for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention;

25 Fig. 27a is a screen display showing a first portion of a further idea submission dialog for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 27b is a screen display showing a second portion of the further idea submission dialog for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention;

- 5 Fig. 28 is a screen display showing an idea submission review dialog for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 29 is a screen display showing an acknowledgement page for an idea submission for a business unit specific portal home page according to the
10 invention;

Fig. 30 is a email acknowledgement for an idea submission for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention;

- 15 Fig. 31 is a screen display showing an idea routing dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 32 is a screen display showing an initial idea submission dialog for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention;
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Fig. 33 is a screen display showing a related idea located during an idea submission dialog for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

- 25 Fig. 34 is a screen display showing an idea submission dialog for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 35 is a screen display showing an idea submission review dialog for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

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Fig. 36 is a screen display showing an acknowledgement page for an idea submission for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

- 5 Fig. 37 is an email acknowledgment for an idea submission for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 38 is a screen display showing an idea routing dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention;

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Fig. 39 is a screen display showing an initial idea submission dialog for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

- 15 Fig. 40 is a screen display showing a related idea located during an idea submission dialog for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

- 20 Fig. 41 is a screen display showing an idea submission dialog for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 42 is a screen display showing an idea submission review dialog for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

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Fig. 43 is a screen display showing an acknowledgement page for an idea submission for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 44 is an email acknowledgment for an idea submission for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention;

Fig. 45 is a screen display showing a home page for the IdeaCentral portal according to the invention;

Fig. 46 is a screen display showing an introduction and frequently asked questions for the IdeaCentral portal according to the invention;

Fig. 47 is a screen display showing a process description page for the IdeaCentral portal according to the invention;

Fig. 48 is a screen display showing an introductory message page for the IdeaCentral portal according to the invention;

Fig. 49 is a screen display showing a home page for the LOOP portal according to the invention;

Fig. 50 is a screen display showing an introductory page for the LOOP portal according to the invention;

Fig. 51 is a screen display showing a monthly update page for the LOOP portal according to the invention;

Fig. 52 is a screen display showing a list of past newsletters for the LOOP portal according to the invention;

Fig. 53 is a screen display showing a testimonial entry dialog for the LOOP portal according to the invention;

Fig. 54 is a screen display showing a testimonial entry acknowledgement for the LOOP portal according to the invention;

5 Fig. 55 is a screen display showing Web updates for the LOOP portal according to the invention;

Fig. 56 is a screen display showing a specific Web update for the LOOP portal according to the invention;

10 Fig. 57 is a screen display showing a home page for the SMART portal according to the invention;

Fig. 58 is a screen display showing an introductory page for the SMART portal according to the invention;

15 Fig. 59 is a screen display showing an incentive page for the SMART portal according to the invention;

20 Fig. 60 is a screen display showing an idea adoption page for the SMART portal according to the invention;

Fig. 61 is a screen display showing sources of assistance for the SMART portal according to the invention;

25 Fig. 62 is a screen display showing employee awards for the SMART portal according to the invention;

Fig. 63 is a screen display showing a peer comment description for the SMART portal according to the invention;

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Fig. 64 is a screen display showing an idea search for the SMART portal according to the invention;

Fig. 65 is a screen display showing idea search results for the SMART portal according to the invention;

Fig. 66 is a screen display showing a peer comment dialog for the SMART portal according to the invention;

Fig. 67 is a screen display showing a peer comment review dialog for the SMART portal according to the invention;

Fig. 68 is a screen display showing a peer comment submission acknowledgement for the SMART portal according to the invention;

Fig. 69 is a screen display showing a home page for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention;

Fig. 70 is a screen display showing an introductory page for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention;

Fig. 71 is a screen display showing details for information identified by links on the introductory page for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention;

Fig. 72 is a screen display showing a business plan development module for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention;

Fig. 73 is a screen display showing details of the business plan development module for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention; and

Fig. 74 is a screen display showing an incentive page for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

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The preferred embodiment of the invention provides a Web-based application that allows employees to submit suggestions and ideas for improving how a company does business. A presently preferred embodiment of the invention supports multiple points of entry, which can include:

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- An entry portal, which is a single point of entry to the Web application (THINK);
- 15 • A point of entry for employees within a specific business unit in a larger entity for submission of suggestions related to the business unit (SMART);
- A point of entry for motivated submitters with an idea about how to change the company's business (VentureQuest);
- 20 • A central point of entry for ideas and suggestions (IdeaCentral); and
- A point of entry for ideas on improving a specific aspect of a company, for example the company's use of the Internet (the LOOP).

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The presently preferred embodiment of the invention is described in connection with a full service brokerage company. However, this embodiment of the invention is provided as an example only and is in no way intended as limiting the scope and applicability of the invention. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the invention is readily applicable to any other enterprises including, for example, commercial, not for profit, and governmental enterprises. Further,

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while the invention is described in connection with an employee suggestion submission application, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the invention is readily applicable to other suggestion submission applications, including, for example, customer and other third party submissions.

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Preferred Embodiment of the Invention - Functionality

10 The following discussion describes various generic components of an innovation network in accordance with the presently preferred embodiment of the invention. The invention is first discussed below in connection with these generic components and thereafter in connection with a specific implementation of a preferred embodiment of the invention.

15 Content Management

Content management functionality is provided for the following areas:

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ); and
- 20 • Site Contact Information.

Site Data Elements

25 The preferred embodiment of the invention implements database with tables for:

- Submission data elements;
- Qualification questions; and
- 30 • Database lookup tables.

Idea Details

For each submitted idea, the preferred embodiment of the invention allows the
5 following types of information to be attached to a suggestion:

- Add review comment;
- Add peer review comment;
- Add link to document or presentation on the Web; and
- Add related idea.

10 15 Torchbearer

The torchbearer is an executive participant and advocate in the suggestion entry
mechanism who has privileges that allow him to:

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- Search all fields;
 - Add torchbearer comments;
 - Delete submissions; and
 - Edit all fields in a submission.
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Reports

30 The preferred embodiment of the invention provides basic reports.

User Validation - In General

Fig. 1 is a block schematic diagram of an authorization process flow according to the invention. At signon (100) user ID and password information are sent to a signon confirmation function (110). In the preferred embodiment of the invention, a ticket window uses this information to generate a ticket (120). The user then has access to various applications within the system (130, 140). The applications incorporate an include file that validates the user ticket (150) in connection with a ticket checker function (160). A security module is also provided that identifies security violations, e.g. user not granted access level commensurate with access level required for application accessed, and reports same for investigation (170).

System Requirements

Table 1 below sets forth portal access levels and participants in the suggestion submission process.

Table 1. Portal Access Levels

Employees	Submitter	Torchbearers	Administration
View site content	Submit new ideas	Change all fields in a submission	Change lookup values in the database
Search submission database		Delete an idea	

Add peer comments after login		Update FAQ and Mission Statements	
		View reports	

Note: Submitters are not able to make changes to an idea after it has been submitted.

5 User Validation - Suggestion Submission

1. To enter a submission, enter a user ID, domain, password, and enterprise to access the site. The user selects the company enterprise from a drop down list that includes, for example:

- Branch Operations & Business Development
- Brokerage Operations
- Business Strategy
- Capital Markets & Trading
- Consumer Products
- Corporate Administration
- Corporate Communications
- Electronic Brokerage
- Finance
- Information Technology
- International
- Mutual Funds
- Retail Client Services
- Retail Finance
- Retail Marketing & Management

- Retirement Plan Services
- Institutional
- Other

5 2. To add a comment to an existing idea, enter domain user id, domain, password, and enterprise to access the site (select enterprise from a drop down list).

3. Capture first name and last name.

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4. Use system objects to retrieve first name, last name, and email. The objects use the domain user id, domain, and password to retrieve this information.

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5. Provide direction to system white pages to update first name, last name or email address as appropriate.

An alternative embodiment of the invention provides a mechanism for linking to a company database for enterprise information.

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Employee/User Search

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Link to view a list of the latest submissions. For the entry portal, return the list of submissions to all innovation groups. For innovation groups, return list of submissions to the appropriate innovation group (*e.g.* system access via an entry point for a specific business unit should return latest submissions for that business unit).

Enter search criteria to return a list of matching submissions.

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Provide quick searches:

- Search for submissions user has submitted.
- Search for submissions user has saved but not submitted.

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- Search Implementation zone (ideas that have been approved, but for which there are no current resources to implement.)

Torchbearer Search

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Search all fields including innovation group qualification questions.

Submit Submissions

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Enter data elements specified in the data model shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Data Model

Table Name	Purpose
SC_IDEA	Contains all information associated with an idea. It is the master table which has several foreign keys to the rest of the tables in this schema.
SC_LOOKUP	A general purpose table used to populate drop down menus, and list boxes.
SC_TEXT	A general purpose table used to hold extended and descriptive text. It is currently used only to hold the text of peer comments.
SC_KEYWORD	Contains the keywords for each idea. Every idea is currently limited to 3 keywords, and these keywords are required, so there will be 3 entries in this table for every idea. This limitation is not a database constraint, but an application (programmed) limitation.
SC_PROGRAM	Contains the Program Names. As more programs are added to this application, this list will grow. Currently, this table contains only In Central, The Loop, SMART and VentureQuest.
SC_REL_IDEA	This table tracks all ideas that the user stated were similar enough to be related to their own idea. Currently, there is a limit of 10 related ideas to each idea, along with descriptive text as to why the user's idea

	is unique from the related idea. This limitation is not a database constraint, but an application (programmed) limitation.
SC_LINK	Currently not used.

*Primary Keys

SC_IDEA			
Column	Datatype	Size	Description
ID_ID *	Int		Unique identifier for every idea. Used to relate ideas and keywords in other tables.
PGM_ID	Int		Foreign Key to SC_PROGRAM. Identifi which program this idea belongs to.
ID_IDEA	Varchar2	2000	Contains the text of the idea the user wish to submit
ID_SHORT_NAME	Varchar2	20	Title of Idea
ID_LONG_NAME	Varchar2	80	More descriptive name/title of idea
ID_CATEGORY	Varchar2	20	Category to which this idea belongs -> fk to sc_lookup
ID_ENTERPRISE	Varchar2	20	Enterprise this idea belongs->fkey to sc_lookup
ID_SUBMIT_DT	Date		
ID_STATUS_DT	Date		Date status was set
ID_APPROVED_DT	Date		
ID_LAST_UPDATE	Date		Date idea was last updated
ID_SUBMITTER	Varchar2	15	Fkey to SC_PERSON ->who submitted the idea
ID_SPONSOR	Varchar2	15	Fkey to SC_PERSON ->who sponsored it
ID_OWNER	Varchar2	15	Fkey to SC_PERSON ->adopted
ID_TB_INCENTIVE			
ID_TB_COMMENT	Varchar2	2000	Torchbearer field
TB_NOTES	Varchar2	2000	Torchbearer field
TB_COMMENT_EXPANDED	Text		Huge field to hold comments exceeding 5 chars.
ID_DOMAIN	Varchar2	30	Fkey->sc_lookup
ID_IDEA_EXPAND	Varchar2	2000	If user wishes to expand on idea, it is kept here. (Idea Central & SMART)
ID_STAT_INIT	Varchar2	2000	Strategic Initiative: (Idea,Smart,Venture,LOOP)
ID_TGT_AUD	Varchar2	2000	SMART: Target Audience
ID_WHO_BENEF	Varchar2	2000	VentureQuest:
ID_NEED_OPOR	Varchar2	2000	VentureQuest:
ID_SUCCESS	Varchar2	2000	VentureQuest:
ID_RULES_BRK_S	Varchar2	2000	VentureQuest:
ID_RULES_BRK_I	Varchar2	2000	VentureQuest:
ID_COMPETITORS	Varchar2	2000	VentureQuest:

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ID_DISRUPTIVE	Varchar		VentureQuest:
ID_SUPPORTS	Varchar		VentureQuest:
ID_PROS			VentureQuest
ID_CONS			VentureQuest
ID_TEAM			SMART
ID_SEGMENT			SMART
ID_LOCATION	Varchar		SMART
ID_SCOPE			SMART
ID_BENEF_TEXT			VentureQuest,SMART
ID_TIMESPENT			Not Used
ID_IMPORTANCE			Not Used
ID_HURDLES			SMART
ID_BUSMODEL			SMART
ID_CUSTNAME			LOOP
ID_CUSTEMAIL			LOOP
ID_ACCOUNT			LOOP
ID_PRODAREA			LOOP
ID_PRODUCT			LOOP
ID_GROUP			LOOP
ID_REASON			LOOP
ID_OPINION			LOOP
ID_HURDLES_OTHER			SMART
ID_PEERS_TALKED			SMART
ID_BENEF_CUST			SMART
ID_BENEF_BOTH			SMART
ID_BENEF_COMP			SMART
ID_BENEF_OTHER			SMART
ID_ENTERPRISE_AFFECTED			SMART, IDEA, VENTUREQUEST
ID_READ_AGREEMENT			Not Used Yet
ID_BENEF_MKT			SMART
ID_BENEF_REV			SMART
ID_BENEF_COST			SMART
ID_BENEF_TEAM			SMART
ID_BENEF_MORALE			SMART
ID_SUB_OWNERSHIP			SMART

SC_LOOKUP			
ColName	Type	Size	Description
ID *	Int		Unique identifier for a row
PGM_ID	Varchar2	10	Fkey-> to SC_PROGRAM, or used to filter program specific values to populate drop down/select boxes with.

LU_TYPE	Varchar2	20	Status, Enterprise, ... etc, or another filter.
LU_VALUE		20	Value of select box
LU_DESC		75	What is displayed by select box
LU_SEQNO	In		Used to set the sort order displayed in form fields.

SC_KEYWORD

ColName	Type	Size	Description
ID_ID *	Int		Which Idea this keyword belongs to. There will be three of these per idea.
KW_ID *	Int		The Keyword's Identifier.
KW_KEYWORD	Varchar2	30	The Keyword's Text in Uppercase

SC_PERSON

ColName	Type	Size	Description
PER_KEY	Varchar2	15	Unique identifier for a person
PER_NAME	Varchar2	50	First and last name separated by a space
PER_ENTERPRISE	Varchar2	20	Enterprise person is associated with. Determined at logon.
PER_PHONE		15	Currently Not Used: User's phone number
PER_EMAIL		30	Obtained by Com Object. Contact Kevin Rogers for Details.

SC_PROGRAM

ColName	Type	Size	Description
PGM_ID *	Varchar2	10	Unique identifier for Program
PGM_SYS_ADMIN	Varchar2	15	Currently Not Used
PGM_INITIAL_URL	Varchar2	255	Currently Not Used
PGM_NAME	Varchar2	30	Program name used when displaying. Contains full proper name of zone or program.

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SC_REL_IDEA

ColName	Type	Size	Description
ID_ID *	Int		This Idea... the idea that will have ideas related to it.
RI_ID *	Int		The Number of the Idea that is related to

			idea : ID_ID
RI_UNIQUE	Varchar2	1000	User's explanation of why the ID_ID is different or unique from the RI_ID.

SC_TEXT			
ColName	Type	Size	Description
ID_ID *	Int		Idea that this text belongs to.
TXT_ID	Int		Unique Identifier for this Row
TXT_DATE	Date		Date this text was introduced.
TXT_TYPE	Varchar2	20	What kind of information this textfield represents.. (Comment, peer-review, other
TXT_BY		20	Not currently used: Author of Text
TXT_TEXT	Varchar2	2000	Content of the textual description.

IDEA CENTRAL	
Question	Column Name
Which Schwab enterprise does your idea affect the most?	ID_ENTERPRISE_AFFECTED
Which of Schwab's key strategic initiatives does your idea support most?	ID_STRAT_INIT
If you would like to expand on your idea and why it is important, please do so here.	ID_IDEA_EXPAND

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LOOP	
Question	Column Name
Customer Name	ID_CUSTNAME
Account	ID_ACCOUNT
Group	ID_GROUP
ProductArea (Website,Email,Velocity,Mobile/Wireless,Other)	ID_PRODAREA
Product Select Boxes (LU_TYPE = Website, E-Mail,Velocity...etc)	ID_PRODUCT
Reason	ID_REASON
Opinion	ID_OPINION

SMART	
Question	Column Name
If you would like to expand on your idea and why it is important, please	ID_IDEA_EXPAND

do so here...	
How much ownership would you like?	ID_SUB_OWNERSHIP
What areas of our business will this idea affect? Choose any that apply:	ID_TGT_AUD
External:	
Internal: Team Specific (y/n)	ID_TEAM
Segment/department	ID_SEGMENT
Location:	ID_LOCATION
Enterprise Affected Most	ID_ENTERPRISE_AFFECTED
Corporate Wide (y/n)	ID_SCOPE
What are the Benefits? Choose any that apply:	
Benefit to Customer	ID_BENEF_CUST
Customer/company relationship benefit	ID_BENEF_BOTH
Company Benefit	ID_BENEF_CUST
If you choose Company Benefit, please select all that apply	
Market Entry	ID_BENEF_MKT
Revenue Enhancer	ID_BENEF_REV
Cost Saver	ID_BENEF_COST
Teamwork	ID_BENEF_TEAM
Morale	ID_BENEF_MORALE
Risk Reduction	ID_HURDLES
Other:	ID_BENEF_OTHER
Which one of Schwab's strategic priorities does your idea support most?	ID_STRAT_INIT

VENTUREQUEST	
Question	Column Name
Which one of Schwab's strategic priorities does your idea support most?	ID_STRAT_INIT
Who would benefit the most? (customers/Employees?)	ID_WHO_BENEF
Describe the employee/customer segment:	ID_BENEF_TEXT
What specific need or opportunity would this idea tackle?	ID_NEED_OPPOR
What signifies success for this idea?	ID_SUCCESS
What (stated or unstated) rules would this idea break?	
Industry rules broken	ID_RULES_BRK_I
Schwab rules broken	ID_RULES_BRK_S
What competitors would this idea upset?	ID_COMPETITORS
How disruptive would this idea be?	ID_DISRUPTIVE
Which Schwab enterprises would be affected?	ID_ENTERPRISE_AFFECTED
Who supports this idea internally?	ID_SUPPORTS
What are the pros of this idea, from supporters perspectives?	ID_PROS
What do supporters say are the cons of this idea?	ID_CONS

Ideas can be submitted through the entry portal or innovation group portals.

Routing questions to determine to which group the submission goes.

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Automatically return a list of related ideas that can be appended to the idea submission. There is a uniqueness field that allows users to explain why their idea is different from other related ideas.

10 Related Idea Search

Create database search, *e.g.* SQL, statements based on keywords.

15 Search options include a cascade search: first keyword matches, long description matches, and then text matches.

The preferred embodiment of the invention stops the search after a predetermined reasonable number of, *e.g.* ten, hits and returns the results.

20 In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the search is not case sensitive.

An alternative embodiment of the invention comprises a search engine.

Idea Submission

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Users can edit text of a submission they own. However, they cannot change the status of an idea.

Save an idea without submitting it to torchbearers.

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Users can append the following to submissions they own:

- Append a comment.
- 5 • Append a link to supporting documentation.
- Append a link to a related idea.

TorchBearer User Functionality

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Security

- System objects handle levels of access according to distribution lists. There is a distribution list for each group of torchbearers.

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TorchBearer Review

- Cannot change text of submission.
- 20 • Can change status, category, affected department, sponsor, and owner.
- Can change innovation group (idea is re-submitted).
- Can append idea review comments.
- 25 • Can add a field to track any rewards. Rewards are viewable only by torchbearers.

Update Content

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- Update mission statement and FAQ.

Reports

- 5
- Ability to view innovation group statistic reports.
 - Ability to print information about idea(s).

Security and Verification

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Uses system objects to validate the login and return first name, last name, and email address of the user based on:

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- Domain;
- ID; and
- Password.

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Alternative embodiments of the invention provide an interface to lookup a user based on name.

Access levels are determined by distribution lists.

Alternative Embodiments of the Invention - Functionality

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The following discussion describes alternative/additional features of the invention.

Content Management

System additionally includes any of:

- 5 • Mission statement;
- Letter from a company executive or submission program sponsor;
- Success stories; and
- 10 • Others as identified,

Qualification Questions

- 15 • Change text of question.
- Build subsets of questions.
- Add/Edit/Delete questions.

Administration

- Add/Edit/Delete departments.
- 25 • Add/Edit/Delete innovation groups.
- Add/Edit/Delete categories.
- Add/Edit/Delete status options.

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Database Archiving

Archive submissions.

5 Reports

Create additional reports, including:

- Statistical reports by group;
- Statistical reports across groups; and
- Content reports.

15 Security Objects

Support lookups.

Export data to tabbed separated files

Reports.

20 Entry Portal Links and Content

Fig. 2 is a block schematic diagram of a static content map for an innovation network according to the invention.

25 The system comprises a portal page with links to each innovation group (IG) portal. In general, the types of links at the entry portal level are duplicated to links at the IG level on the IG portal pages.

In fig. 2, a first level entry portal (200) to the innovation network allows access to a company home page (210), a message from management concerning innovation and its value to the company (205), information concerning innovation (350), various user resources (370), a description of the innovation network (340), various statistics (360), a search facility (320), a facility for viewing submissions (330), and a mechanism for routing a user to a most appropriate point of entry to the innovations network (260).

If the user knows which portal he desires to enter, the user may enter the portal from the first entry level portal. In this embodiment of the invention, the portals are identified as the LOOP (220), SMART (230), IdeaCentral (240), and VentureQuest (250). As discussed above, if the user is uncertain as to the portal through which he should enter the innovation network, the invention provides a dialog that directs the user to the most appropriate portal (260).

For each portal, there is a set of dialogs that allow the user to submit ideas, search for ideas, and view ideas. The various portal also include additional features that are specific to the portal (discussed below). Features that the various portal have in common include an information page (221, 231, 241, 251), a statistics page (222, 233, 243, 253), an idea entry page (223, 232, 242, 252), an idea submission function that provides a user with the opportunity to review his submission before it is entered into the system (224, 234, 244, 254), a search feature that allows a user to search through ideas, either for inspiration or to locate related ideas (227, 237, 246, 256), a view function that allows a user to browse through the ideas within the portal and view same (226, 236, 247, 257), and various other functions (225, 235, 245, 255) which are discussed below.

Static Content MapPage Requirements and Functionality

Fig. 3 is a block schematic diagram of an idea submission main page (300) showing top links according to the invention. In Fig. 3, the main entry portal (310) is reached from a company home page(200) via a link provided in the home page. From the innovation network main page (310), the user may search ideas (320), view ideas (330), read information about the innovation network (340), read a discussion on the subject of innovation (350), view statistics on the innovation network (360), and be advised of various resources for further information (370).

Each of these functions is supported at additional levels.

Thus, an idea search (320) includes a idea search entry page (321) from which a search may be performed (322), by which search results are returned to the user (323), and from which the user may view the details of any idea so located (324).

The user may also add peer comments to an idea (325), the idea may be edited by appropriate persons (326), related ideas may be linked to the idea (327), and the torchbearer may add comments concerning the idea (328). While these features are described in connection with a search function, it will be appreciated that they are readily accessed through other innovation network functions.

The user may view submissions (as discussed above), including the latest results (331) and the details of any submissions (332).

Information concerning the innovation network may also include a entry page (341). Likewise, information describing innovation may include an entry page (351), the statistics functions may include an entry page (361), and the user resources function may include an entry page (371).

Fig. 4 is a block schematic diagram of an idea submission main page showing bottom links according to the invention. From a link or dialog (410) on the main page, the user may enter any of the various portals provided in the innovation network. Thus, if the user selects IdeaCentral (240), he is directed to the IdeaCentral portal (430); if the user selects the LOOP (220), he is directed to the LOOP portal (440); if the user selects SMART (230), he is directed to the SMART portal (450); and if the user selects VentureQuest (250), he is directed to the VentureQuest portal (460).

An important feature of the invention is the ability to support multiple portals that serve to direct submissions to a most appropriate location within the company, such that they are considered by the most appropriate persons. This feature is enhanced by the provision of a facility for assisting a user in directing their submission to the most correct and appropriate portal (260). Such feature guides the user through a dialog such that the suggestion is automatically routed to the most appropriate portal as a result of the user's responses. In such facility, the user may have previously submitted an idea (470, 471). In this case, the user may already know the most appropriate portal to which his submission is to be directed. The user enters the submission (472), verifies that the submission is correctly entered (473), indicates a level of commitment to the submission (474), and the submission is directed for viewing and consideration (475).

If the user has not submitted an idea previously, or is not certain which is the most appropriate portal (470, 476), the invention provides an interview dialog (477). As part of this process, the user may search the idea (478), for example to locate related ideas, view the search results (479), and view individual submission from the listed results (480). The user may also add peer comments to an idea (481), the idea may be edited by appropriate persons (482), related

ideas may be linked to the idea (483), and the torchbearer may add comments concerning the idea (484).

Fig. 5 is a block schematic diagram of a search page site map according to the invention. In Fig. 5, two initial types of searches are offered, a general search (510a) and a latest submissions search (510b). Each of these searches proceeds through a corresponding search dialog (511, 512). The user may also use the search mechanism to locate ideas and link them to other ideas (520). Finally, the user typically incorporates an idea search into the idea submission process (470) to avoid duplication of ideas and to provide links to related ideas. In the later case, if the idea submission search has already been performed the idea may be submitted without additional searching (472). In all other cases an idea search is undertaken by the system (478).

An idea list (479) is generated as a result of an idea search, an idea submission search, or a latest ideas search.. The list is used to access various ideas via an idea header (480). Once the idea is selected for viewing, the user may add comments (481). The idea submission mechanism also provides for the creation of links to other information (500), the incorporation of related submission (483), the addition of comments (484), and editing of the submission (482).

The following discussion describes the search mechanism in greater detail.

Search Ideas

A set of fields for entering search criteria, plus one or more check boxes, *e.g.* "ideas submitted by me".

Search Results

A list of ideas matching search criteria from one or more search Ideas pages, or other processes. At least three parts of the application go to this page and display a list of ideas.

5 Latest Ideas

A list of ideas matching various criteria; *e.g.* the last ten ideas submitted across all of the innovation groups, or the last three submitted for each. This page is the same as the search results page, but with a different title/message.

10 Enter My Idea (Where to go)

An idea is entered via a series of pages. An idea is entered from either the entry portal or one of the IG portals. Depending on how a user arrives at the idea submission point in the system, the graphic treatment may be different, but the layout is preferably identical.

Once past the initial pages, the rest of the pages vary depending on the IG to which the idea is submitted.

20 The following illustrates the pages associated with a user dialog during idea submission:

Page 1

25 Checked for Similar Ideas?

Have you checked the Idea database for similar ideas?

- Yes

- No

If yes, proceed to Login; if no send to Search Ideas.

5

Page 2

Login

10 User enters following:

- Domain
- ID
- Password
- Enterprise - (drop down list of enterprise groups within company)

15
20 If login successful, go to Verification; if not, message and reprompt.

Page 3

Verification

25

Show

- ID
- Name

30

- Email

5 An informative message at the bottom of the page, *e.g.* "If name or email information is incorrect, do XXX to fix it. You may still submit your idea if the information is incorrect."

Page 4

10 Routing Questions

Two questions, implemented as radio buttons in the preferred embodiment of the invention:

- 15
- My idea is focused on the company external Web site;
 - My idea improves upon our current business process; or
 - My idea is revolutionary and will change the way we do business.

20

And:

- I want to own my idea through presentation and approval; or
- 25
- I want to submit my idea and watch from the sidelines.

Where a user goes depends on his answers to above and his enterprise (from page 2). The user sees a page, *e.g.* "The best place for your idea is <Innovation Group>.

30

Which IG the user's idea is routed to is based upon:

- If Web focused, then to the Web related portal.
- 5 • If my idea improves business process, then to the company related portal.
- If not Web, and the enterprise is a specific business unit within the company, then to that business unit.
- 10 • If my idea is revolutionary and I want to own idea, then to the portal for ideas that challenge the company's current business ideas.
- If my idea is revolutionary, but I don't want to own idea, then to a central suggestion repository.

15 Page 5

After displaying message about the IG to which the idea is to be submitted, the system proceeds to a page that, aside from graphics, is the same for all IGs (page 5).

Idea Submission Form

Form asking the following:

- Idea Name (20 characters)
- Idea Title (80 characters)
- 30 • Keywords (3 to 5)

- Idea Category (from dropdown)

- Product

- Service

- Work Process

- Employee-Related

- Other

When the user clicks the "Continue" button, the application performs a search on the idea database and sends the user to the Search Results page. There is a title/message making it clear that the system found ideas that may be similar to the idea that the user is about to enter.

From the Search Results page there is a button for continuing the idea submission process. This button is only there if the user got to the Search Results page through the idea submission process. This button takes user to Interview 5.

Idea Detail Pages

Page shows idea information. Depending on privileges of user, different buttons are enabled:

Buttons:

- View Comments (shows all comments of all types)
- View Links (e.g. links to files, URLs in support of idea)
- 5 • View Related Ideas (Idea List of related ideas)
- Add Peer Comments (data entry screen to add a Peer Comment)
- Edit Idea (Form to update fields per security/authority)
- 10 • Add Related Idea
- Add TorchBearer/Other Comment

15 Entry Portal Statistics Page

The statistics page provides core statistics that appear for each statistic page. The entry portal shows statistics for all innovation zones. While statistics for each innovation zone show only statistics for that zone.

20 Table 3 below shows statistics for the various entry points of the system

Table 3. Statistics Kept, By Entry Point

Business Unit Specific	Central Idea Repository	Web	Revolutionary Ideas
Site hits by month			
Submissions (last quarter, quarter to	Ideas submitted this week (or month)		

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date)			
Approved submissions from last quarter	Number of ideas submitted by category (product ideas, service ideas, work process ideas, employee-related ideas, other ideas)		
Submissions approved for local "go" (last quarter, plus this quarter to date)	Ideas submitted to date		
Ideas implemented (year to date)			
All of the above by team, segment, enterprise and idea category			
	User sessions to the portal home page		
	Number of ideas submitted by category (product ideas, service ideas, work process ideas, employee-related ideas, other ideas)		
	Top keywords		

	(pulled from keywords entered by idea owners not what's searched)		
	Which enterprise is receiving most ideas - by month (this only works if all enterprises have the same question, e.g. "which enterprise is most affected by your idea)		

Qualification Questions

There are one or more IG specific pages on which a person making a submission is asked for idea information. After all of the idea entry pages are completed, the user goes to the Submit/Save page. The user may submit the idea, or save it and perhaps submit at later time:

- Submit my idea.
- Save my idea so I can work on it later.

If an idea is submitted, the application generates a confirmation email.

Qualification Questions - Submission of Ideas the Change Company's Way of
Doing Business

There should be only one answer to each question.

5

How well does the idea fit with company's strategic priorities?

Select the main priority this idea addresses:

- 10
- Provide Spectacular Customer Service
 - Invest in World-Class Talent
 - Offer Company-Style Help and Advice
- 15
- Extend the Reach and Meaning of Company Brand
 - Expand into New Lines of Business
- 20
- Broaden Company's Electronic Services
 - Target Different Customer Segments
 - Foster Innovation
- 25
- Continuously Improve our Processes
 - Maintain Superior Technology
- 30
- None of the above, but still a great idea

Who would benefit the most?

Customers?

Describe the customer segment:

5 (click here for examples)

[EXAMPLES: 401(k) plans smaller than \$20 million; prospects with under \$5,000 to invest; people who own small countries]

10 *Employees?*

Describe the employee segment:

(click here for examples)

15

[EXAMPLES: employees with more than five years at Company; new employees; employees named Gilbert or Sullivan who work in that new musicals enterprise]

20 What specific need or opportunity would this idea tackle?

(click here for examples)

25 [EXAMPLES: we don't offer corporate trustee services yet and it's a \$47 billion dollar business; no one in the industry is printing their own currency and we could be first]

What signifies success for this idea?

30 (click here for examples)

[EXAMPLES: revenues of \$32 trillion; cost savings of \$16 gazillion; customer relationships having cement-like consistency; market share of 99.44 percent; bragging rights for being first; employee retention rates so high everyone has caller ID to screen out those bothersome headhunter calls]

What (stated or unstated) rules would this idea break?

Company rule(s):

(click here for examples)

[EXAMPLES: prospects with less than \$5,000 to invest are unprofitable; we're in the financial services business; the Web is the platform for the future]

Industry rule(s):

(click here for examples)

[EXAMPLES: the stock market isn't a safe short-term play for individual investors; by 2005, there will be only five global financial powerhouses; the experts know better than a bunch of darts randomly thrown]

Which competitors would this idea upset the most?

[EXAMPLES : Full commission brokers; Discount brokers; Mutual fund companies; Banks Wells Fargo; Insurance]

How disruptive would this idea be?

- Extremely disruptive

(It would really shake things up in a revolutionary way.)

- 5
- Disruptive

(Things would have to change significantly. If your idea is not disruptive, your idea belongs in the central idea repository.)

10 Which Company enterprises would be affected?

- All
- Branch Operations & Business Development

15

- Brokerage Operations
- Business Strategy

20

- Capital Markets & Trading
- Consumer Products

25

- Corporate Administration
- Corporate Communications
- Electronic Brokerage

30

- Finance

- Information Technology

- International

5

- Mutual Funds

- Retail Client Services

10

- Retail Finance

- Retail Marketing & Management

- Retirement Plan Services

15

- Institutional

Who supports this idea internally (at the time of submission)?

20

What are the pros of this idea, from supporters' perspectives?

What do supporters say are the cons of this idea?

25

Business Unit Qualification Questions

30 How well does the idea fit with Company's strategic priorities?

- Select the main priority this idea addresses:

- Provide Spectacular Customer Service

- Invest in World-Class Talent

- Offer Company-Style Help and Advice

- Extend the Reach and Meaning of Our Brand

- Expand into New Lines of Business

- Broaden our Electronic Financial Services

- Target Different Customer Segments

- Foster Innovation

- Continuously Improve our Processes

- Maintain Superior Technology

- None of the above, but still a great idea

How much ownership would you like?

- Complete -- I'd like to own it all the way through the presentation and implementation stages, getting help from a torchbearer and other experts as needed.

- Partial -- I'd like to own this idea only to the presentation stage, getting help from a torchbearer and other experts as needed.

- None -- I don't want to own it at all.

5 If the idea gets approved, how much time would you personally be able to provide to assist in implementation?

If you would like to expand on your idea and why it is important, please do so here?

10 Who is the target audience (what areas will this affect)?

Check and fill in blanks as appropriate to your idea:

15 External

(drop down list)

- Existing customers

- 20 • New segment

- Prospects

- All of the above

25 Internal

- Team: text field

- 30 • Segment/department: text field

- Location: drop down list

Denver

5

Phoenix

Indianapolis

10

Orlando

San Francisco

More than one

15

- Enterprise: drop down list

Defining Measurements of Success

20

What are the benefits?

- Customer benefit: drop down list

- Revenue Enhancer

25

- Cost Saver

- Teamwork

30

- Moral

- Market Entry

- Risk Reduction

- Other

- Other: text box

- 10 • Customer/company relationship benefit: text field

What are the potential hurdles to implementation?

- Time

- Resources (people, money)

- Access to corporate

- 20 • Availability of information

- Other:

- Other: text box

How does this change the current business model? (optional)

Have you done a peer review?

(Y/N)

If no, display text suggesting they have peer reviews.

5

Qualification Questions for Central Entry Portal

Which Company enterprise does your idea affect the most?

10

- All

- Branch Operations & Business Development

- Brokerage Operations

15

- Business Strategy

- Capital Markets & Trading

20

- Consumer Products

- Corporate Administration

- Corporate Communications

25

- Electronic Brokerage

- Finance

30

- Information Technology

- International

- Mutual Funds

5

- Retail Client Services

- Retail Finance

- 10
- Retail Marketing & Management

- Retirement Plan Services

- Institutional

15

Which of Company's key strategic initiatives does your idea support most?
(matches entry portal for ideas that change the company's way of doing business)

- 20
- Provide Spectacular Customer Service

- Invest in World Class Talent

- Offer Company-Style Help and Advice

25

- Extend the Reach and Meaning of Company Brand

- Expand into New Lines of Business

- 30
- Broaden our Electronic Financial Services

- Target Different Customer Segments

- Foster Innovation

5

- Continuously improve our Processes

- Maintain Superior Technology

- 10
- None of the above but I think the idea is worth considering

If you would like to expand on your idea and why it is important, please do so here.

15 Functional Requirements - Business Unit Specific Entry Portal

Home Page

- Similar look and feel to main entry portal

20

- What is the business unit specific entry portal (Update Content)

- mission statement

- 25
- FAQ

- Incentives

- Search Ideas

30

- Statistics
- Learning Center
- 5 • View Latest Ideas
- Contact List I “if you have further questions, please see your local...”

Routing Questions

10

Same as the application entry portal.

Owner/Implementer Field

- 15 There are two ownership “names,” *i.e.* “implementer,” and “owner” (who is always listed as the idea originator no matter what the status).

Torchbearer Incentive Field

- 20 There is an incentives memo field that allows torchbearers to add an incentive which is then provided to the employee.

Search capability

- 25 • Recognizes repeat ideas as they are entered;
- Asks the representative to identify why this idea is different;
- When a “past idea” is recognized, allows new owner to combine forces with
- 30 past owner if idea has not yet been implemented;

- When recognizing duplicate ideas, adds text to not scare people away – “if old idea, environment may be different now.”

5 Implementation Zone

- Separate area for ideas that have already been submitted and approved, but need implementation due to lack of available resources;

- 10 • There is a “needs implementation” status;

- Adopter with resources can pick up and implement/project manage;

- 15 • Allows ideas to be sent only at the option of the idea owner – unless it is determined that the owner is not attempting to work on the idea. In the latter case, the ideas can be placed here after consulting with owner.

What are the idea status options? - “Status” list

- 20 • Not submitted – for adoption zone needing an owner;

- Submitted, not reviewed;

- Under review;

25

- No go;

- Go;

- 30 • Further study;

- Needs implementation – approved, but needs implementation support;
- Completed.

5

Local Flag

On “simple” or “local” fixes, an idea is flagged to route the idea efficiently to local resources.

10

Email Notification

An “Acceptance of idea” email auto-reply is provided on all submissions to set expectations on the process. Email tells the idea’s owner to which portal that idea was sent.

15

Peer rating

- Make “peer rating” optional, but offer some incentive (*i.e.* “your idea will be given more weight,”). Also, guarantee that original idea owner name stays with idea while peer review is being obtained.
- Leave it open ended as an additional idea descriptor, and also ask for comments from other employees, or “what sparked this idea?”

20

25 Email Notification Pick List

Auto response on “no go,” with “ten common reasons” that can be checked off.

Content Management

Contact management system.

5 DB Export

Can export data from database to spreadsheet.

Online guidance

10

- Presentation guidelines;
- Project management guidelines and steps;
- 15 • "idea owner handbook."

Back-end query functionality

20

- Reporting;
- Tracking.

Example

- 25 Fig. 6 is a flow diagram showing process for a business unit specific entry portal (SMART) according to the invention. In this example, a person having an idea that they wish to submit to the company enters the innovation network at the innovation network Web site (410). The point of entry could also be via a company intranet, or through a dedicated facility, such as a kiosk in the company
- 30 cafeteria.

The user is directed to a most appropriate submission portal via a dialog (260) that automatically directs the submission as a result of a user interview. The interview comprises various questions that resolve a destination for the user submission.

In this example, the user is asked if the idea relates to the company Web site (605), in which case the user is directed to a portal which is referred to as the LOOP (220); and the user is asked if the idea is related to a specific business unit (610), in this example retail customer services (RCS), in which case the user is directed to a portal which is referred to as SMART (230). If the first two portals are not the most appropriate, then the user is asked if he wants ownership of the idea (620). Ownership, for purposes of this discussion, refers to the degree of commitment the user has to seeing the idea through to fruition. If a requisite degree of ownership is not desired, then the idea is directed to a portal which is referred to as IdeaCentral (240); if the requisite degree of ownership is desired, then the idea is directed to a portal which is referred to as VentureQuest (250).

While this example concerns the presently preferred implementation of the SMART portal, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the invention may be implemented using similar features on any number of portals, and that the portals themselves may be created and operated to collect and evaluate submissions for any number of areas of concern to the company. For example, if the innovation network is used by a government entity, rather than a for-profit company, there may be portals for customer service, infrastructure, and the like.

In this example, the user is directed to the SMART portal (230). Ideas submitted to this portal may also be routed to other portals (630), such that the submission is directed to all appropriate locations and thus achieves maximum exposure within the company.

The submission process is initially self screening (631) in that the user may determine that the submission is not necessary as a result of a search or by viewing other submission. If the user submits an idea (632), it is subjected to a local torchbearer review (633) as a first level of evaluation thereof. The review process is used to determine if the idea is appropriately placed at this portal (634) and, if not, it is routed to another, more appropriate, portal (635).

If the idea is corrected placed, a determination is made whether the idea is to be considered locally (636), in which case the user is directed to a local resource (637). If the idea is has company-wide application, then a determination is made whether the idea is to be sent to a steering committee for review (638). If the idea does not merit such review, then a report is provided to the owner of the idea (who may be the submitter of the idea or may be another individual having ownership of the idea) indicating that the idea is "no go" (639). If the idea has merit, it is routed to the steering committee for review (641). The steering committee evaluates the idea and makes a recommendation (640). If the recommendation is "no go" ((639) the owner of the idea is so advised. If the steering committee recommends GO, the idea may either be routed to a corporate sponsor who implements the idea with the assistance of the idea's owner (642); or a determination may be made whether the owner has the time and resources necessary to implement the idea (643, 645) or whether the idea should be placed in an adoption zone (644) until a sponsor is found or volunteers to implement the idea.

System Navigation - Graphical User Interface

The following discussion and related figures provide a practical implementation of the preferred embodiment of the invention discussed above. In particular, the graphical user interface is described in detail, where the same numeric reference

designators that correspond to previously discussed features of the invention are used to identify such features in connection with the graphical user interface. To the extent that these features are already discussed herein, a discussion thereof is not provided below.

5

Fig. 7 is a screen display showing a multi-portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 8 is a screen display showing an introduction and frequently asked questions (FAQ) dialogue for a multi-portal home page according to the invention.

10

Fig. 9 is a screen display showing an executive introduction to a multi-portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 10 is a screen display showing a learning center page for a multi-portal home page according to the invention.

15

Fig. 11 is a screen display showing a statistics page for a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, statistics are provided based upon ideas submitted over various time intervals and by portal of entry (1110); a status table is provided, based upon actions taken or to be taken, and based upon portal of entry (1120), and ideas are sorted by category and portal of entry (1130).

20

Fig. 12 is a screen display showing a search page for a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, various search criteria may be entered (1210), *e.g.* by means of various pull down menus or data entry fields (1220). The user may complete the search dialog and either submit the search (1230) or clear the form (1240) to reenter search criteria.

25

30

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Fig. 13 is a screen display showing a search results page for a multi-portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 14 is a screen display showing a detailed search result for a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, a submission is shown including summary details (1410), such as submitter's name and the like, a description of the idea (1430), a comment (1420), and a list of comments submitted, along with identifying information (1440).

Fig. 15 is a screen display showing a comment field for an idea located during a search in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the comment field (151) is a text box. However, a pull down menu or other mechanism may also or alternatively be provided for the entry of comments.

Fig. 16 is a screen display showing an idea submission dialog that is associated with an idea located during a search in a multi-portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 17 is a screen display showing an idea routing dialog that is associated with an idea located during a search in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the user has selected "My idea relates to Electronic Brokerage (EB) products (1710). Thus, the system routes the submission to the LOOP.

Fig. 18 is a screen display showing an idea entry dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 19 is a screen display showing a related idea located during idea submission in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the

related idea (1910) is presented and the user may link the idea to (1920) and/or differentiate the idea from (1930) the related idea.

Fig. 20 is a screen display showing an idea submission dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 21 is a screen display showing an idea submission review dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the user is presented with an opportunity to review their submission (2110). By submitting the idea, the user assigns all rights in the idea to the company (2120), thereby allowing the company freedom of action with regard to implementation thereof.

Fig. 22 is a screen display showing an acknowledgement page for an idea submission in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (2210). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

Fig. 23 is an email acknowledgement for an idea submission in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (2310). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

Fig. 24 is a screen display showing an idea routing dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the user has selected "My idea is primarily related to Retail Client Services" (2410). Thus, the submission is routed to the SMART portal.

Fig. 25 is a screen display showing an initial idea submission dialog for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention.

5 Fig. 26 is a screen display showing a related idea located during an idea submission for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention. In this example, a related idea is located (2610) and the user is asked to confirm if the idea is similar or not and, if not, to indicate why.

10 Fig. 27a is a screen display showing a first portion of a further idea submission dialog for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention. In this example, a dialog is provided to the user by which the user indicates the degree of ownership desired (2710) in bearing the idea forward within the company.

15 Fig. 27b is a screen display showing a second portion of the further idea submission dialog for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention.

20 Fig. 28 is a screen display showing an idea submission review dialog for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention. In this example, all information relating to the submission is summarized (2810) for the user's review. If the user wants to add or change anything in the submission, he selects the "Make Changes" box (2820). Otherwise, the submission is sent to the innovation network for review (see the discussion of Fig. 7 above).

25

Fig. 29 is a screen display showing an acknowledgement page for an idea submission for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (2910). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of

personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

Fig. 30 is a email acknowledgement for an idea submission for a business unit specific portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (3010). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

Fig. 31 is a screen display showing an idea routing dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the user has selected the "My idea improves upon out current business process regardless of what enterprise in impacted" (3110). As a result, the submission is forward to the IdeaCentral portal.

Fig. 32 is a screen display showing an initial idea submission dialog for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 33 is a screen display showing a related idea located during an idea submission dialog for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention. In this example, a related idea is located (3310) and the user is asked to confirm if the idea is similar or not and, if not, to indicate why.

Fig. 34 is a screen display showing an idea submission dialog for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 35 is a screen display showing an idea submission review dialog for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention. In this example, all information relating to the submission is summarized (3510) for the user's review. If the user wants to add or change anything in the submission, he

selects the "Make Changes" box (3520). Otherwise, the submission is sent to the innovation network for review (3530) (see the discussion of Fig. 7 above).

Fig. 36 is a screen display showing an acknowledgement page for an idea submission for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (3610). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

Fig. 37 is an email acknowledgment for an idea submission for a central idea submission portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (3710). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

Fig. 38 is a screen display showing an idea routing dialog in a multi-portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the user has selected "My idea transforms the way we do business and I am passionate enough about it to take part in the official approval and implementation process. I understand this may require a significant amount of my time" (3810). As a result, the submission is routed to the VentureQuest portal.

Fig. 39 is a screen display showing an initial idea submission dialog for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 40 is a screen display showing a related idea located during an idea submission dialog for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention. on dialog for a central idea submission portal

home page according to the invention. In this example, a related idea is located (4010) and the user is asked to confirm if the idea is similar or not and, if not, to indicate why.

- 5 Fig. 41 is a screen display showing an idea submission dialog for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention.

Fig. 42 is a screen display showing an idea submission review dialog for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention. In this example, all information relating to the submission is summarized (4210) for the user's review. If the user wants to add or change anything in the submission, he selects the "Make Changes" box (4220). Otherwise, the submission is sent to the innovation network for review (see the discussion of Fig. 7 above).

15 Fig. 43 is a screen display showing an acknowledgement page for an idea submission for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (4310). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

25 Fig. 44 is an email acknowledgment for an idea submission for a business improvement idea submission portal home page according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (4410). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

30 Fig. 45 is a screen display showing a home page for the IdeaCentral portal according to the invention.

Fig. 46 is a screen display showing an introduction and frequently asked questions for the IdeaCentral portal according to the invention.

5 Fig. 47 is a screen display showing a process description page for the IdeaCentral portal according to the invention. In this example, the user is provided with instruction on the use of this portal and an explanation of the process (4710).

10 Fig. 48 is a screen display showing an introductory message page for the IdeaCentral portal according to the invention. In this example, a member of the executive staff has authored an explanation of the significance of innovation to the company (4810) which is available to employees who may want to submit an idea for consideration.

15 Fig. 49 is a screen display showing a home page for the LOOP portal according to the invention.

20 Fig. 50 is a screen display showing an introductory page for the LOOP portal according to the invention.

Fig. 51 is a screen display showing a monthly update page for the LOOP portal according to the invention. In this example, there is a monthly update regarding product development, especially in regard to employee ideas (5110).

25 Fig. 52 is a screen display showing a list of past newsletters for the LOOP portal according to the invention. In this example, there is a list of previous editions of the monthly newsletter, along with links directly to the newsletters (5210).

Fig. 53 is a screen display showing a testimonial entry dialog for the LOOP portal according to the invention. In this example, a dialog is provided by which customer testimonials may be captured with regard to various products (5310). This mechanism allows the introduction and evaluation of third party ideas.

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Fig. 54 is a screen display showing a testimonial entry acknowledgement for the LOOP portal according to the invention. In this example, the idea number is merged with the acknowledgement (5410). In other embodiments of the invention, different degrees of personalization may be provided, for example using well known text merge functions.

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Fig. 55 is a screen display showing Web updates for the LOOP portal according to the invention. In this example, a list of company updates is provided in a left hand side of a display area (5510), while the contents of the updates are listed on the right hand side of the display area.

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Fig. 56 is a screen display showing a specific Web update for the LOOP portal according to the invention. In this example, a detailed product report is shown (5610). In the product information, ideas are solicited (5620). Selecting this link "Submit Suggestions for changes" takes the user directly to the innovation network idea submission dialog (see Figs. 57 and 58).

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Fig. 57 is a screen display showing a home page for the SMART portal according to the invention.

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Fig. 58 is a screen display showing an introductory page for the SMART portal according to the invention.

Fig. 59 is a screen display showing an incentive page for the SMART portal according to the invention. In this example, the incentive program is described (5910).

- 5 Fig. 60 is a screen display showing an idea adoption page for the SMART portal according to the invention. In this example, ideas in need of adoption are listed (6010).

- 10 Fig. 61 is a screen display showing sources of assistance for the SMART portal according to the invention. In this example, contact information is provided for help in locating a local torchbearer and getting an idea submitted (6110).

Fig. 62 is a screen display showing employee awards for the SMART portal according to the invention. In this example, award winners are listed (6210).

15 Fig. 63 is a screen display showing a peer comment description for the SMART portal according to the invention. In this example, a description of the peer comment feature is provided, as well as a link to allow a user to enter a peer comment (6310).

20 Fig. 64 is a screen display showing an idea search for the SMART portal according to the invention.

25 Fig. 65 is a screen display showing idea search results for the SMART portal according to the invention. In this example, a list of ideas located during a search is provided (6510).

Fig. 66 is a screen display showing a peer comment dialog for the SMART portal according to the invention.

Fig. 67 is a screen display showing a peer comment review dialog for the SMART portal according to the invention. In this example, a dialog is provided for adding a peer comment (6710).

- 5 Fig. 68 is a screen display showing a peer comment submission acknowledgement for the SMART portal according to the invention. In this example, a message is sent to the submitter (6810) thanking them for their comment. The message provides links that allow the user to search again, submit an idea or their own, or review their comments.

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Fig. 69 is a screen display showing a home page for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention.

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Fig. 70 is a screen display showing an introductory page for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention.

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Fig. 71 is a screen display showing details for information identified by links on the introductory page for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention. In this example, a description is provided for the VentureQuest portal (7210).

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Fig. 72 is a screen display showing a business plan development module for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention. In this example, the innovation network is used to link an employee to additional company information that is related to the innovation process within the company. Here, a company module for developing a business plan is provided (7310). Unique to the invention is the association of all aspects of innovation with the innovation network. Thus, the innovation network functions more broadly than a repository for suggestions and ideas, but also as a clearing house for both innovations and important information relating to innovation.

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Fig. 73 is a screen display showing details of the business plan development module for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention. In this example, business plan templates (7410) are provided for the business plan module of Fig. 72.

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Fig. 74 is a screen display showing an incentive page for the VentureQuest portal according to the invention. In this example, a company incentive plan (7510) is explained.

10 Although the invention is described herein with reference to the preferred embodiment, one skilled in the art will readily appreciate that other applications may be substituted for those set forth herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

15 For example, a submission may be attached from an outside source to the innovation network, such that a person not having access to the innovation network may nonetheless submit an idea. Thus, an idea may be emailed to an employee and the email message may be attached to, or merged in, the idea submission dialog.

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The statistics feature may be implemented to provide data in any desired format. For example, the data from all innovation zones may be aggregated. Also, ideas may be summarized by category. Reports may be automatically generated and circulated to appropriate persons, *e.g.* torchbearers, including such information as number of visits to a particular innovation zone by employees and the number of submission sessions. Further, statistics may be kept tracking the impact of a particular idea on the company, *e.g.* costs savings or increase in revenue attributable to the idea.

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30 A tickler system may be implemented, where a message is automatically sent to all "no go" submitters after a predetermined interval, *e.g.* three months, encouraging additional submissions; or automatic reminders may be sent for each stage of the idea submission process to maintain employee involvement.

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The status of a submission may be variously reported. For example, one status option may include an "awaiting enterprise response" field. Further, a notation may be included at each step of the review process, automatically indicating who has reviewed the submission, *e.g.* it has been reviewed by the local torchbearer.

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The user interface may also be enhanced, for example mandatory questions within a dialog may be highlighted, *e.g.* in red and/or with an exclamation mark and/or by advising a submitter that certain identified questions must be answered before the idea may be submitted. Further, a mechanism may be provided for checking that mandatory information is provided, and for advising a submitter if certain required fields are not completed.

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The user interface may also include a "do not submit" and/or "save" button for employees who do not want to submit an idea, or who want to review and/or edit the idea offline for later submission. A help dialog may also be included, where a submitter is actively guided through the idea submission process in a manner similar to that of the MacOS Guide. The submitter may also be linked to example ideas for the particular innovation zone that the submitter is visiting to help the submitter determine if they are at the correct innovation zone.

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The search function may include a global search function that searches across all innovation zones and that optionally identifies the zones in which each located submission resides; or the search function may be limited to a specific innovation zone or zones, *e.g.* by use of a dialog that includes a check box for each zone, where the submitter checks the zones in which the search is to be conducted. The search results may also include a brief summary of the status of the located submissions; and a "search again" feature may be included with the search results to expedite additional searching.

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Another aspect of the invention allows a torchbearer or other individual to assign submissions to others, such as other torchbearers.

Another embodiment of the invention provides a means to manage communication/email around an idea. For example, email could be managed from within the edit an idea screen. A user clicks on a button "send response to

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user" and the system starts an e-mail screen, including generic response text that is customized. Another button, "forward this idea," populates an e-mail window with the idea detail. This enhances knowledge management around ideas, as well as adding to productivity and efficiency of program administrators.

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One aspect of this feature gives an administrator the option to send an e-mail to the submitter, notifying them that a change/update has been made to their idea.

Another aspect of this feature create functionality for the administrator to send an email, including the text of an idea to enterprise reviewed; allows the administrator to customize the introduction to the email; allows the idea to be sent to multiple parties; and/or creates a record of date sent and to whom

Yet another aspect of this feature creates an automated email to the submitter when the administrator changes the zone.

Another aspect of the invention provides Integration to email in the form of a template that populates an email screen with an idea, where the idea is forwarded to the idea submitter's managers for recognition.

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Accordingly, the invention should only be limited by the Claims included below.